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J Argentina

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: December 26, 1978

SUBJECT : Human Rights

PLACE : United States Chancery, Buenos Aires

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Emilio Mignone, Vice President, Permanent
Assembly for Human Rights
Mr. F. Allen Harris, Political Officer,
American Embassy, Buenos Aires

COPIES TO : ARA/ECA - Mr. Bumpus AMB
HA/HR - Mr. Flood DCM
INR/RAR - Mr. Buchanan POL
ARA - Mr. Lister POL/R
INR/OIL/NFAC/ USICA
ORPA/LAD - Mr. Schwab ECON
DAO

A Change in Anti-subversive Tactics?

Dr. Mignone noted that the Assembly had received three or four reports in recent weeks of murders carried out by anti-subversive groups. He noted that it was too early to determine whether this was a basic change in operational tactics or a necessity imposed on the anti-subversive effort by the recent loss of resources to the war effort against Chile. He specifically mentioned the case of a La Plata couple, Laura Sagarra and FNU Torres, who were killed in their home in early December by persons identified as soldiers. Their bodies and household effects were removed the next day by military trucks. Mignone noted that the past practice would have seen the individuals "arrested" and then disappear. The Assembly has recent reports of two other on the spot murders.

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Drafting Office and Officer

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Buenos Aires Detention Facility

Mignone related the following information: A public employee was kidnapped in Buenos Aires in early December, held for fifteen days, and then released. This person was interrogated and severely beaten but not tortured with either the picanas or submarine. He was held blindfolded in a detention facility with some 40 or 50 other individuals. He estimated to Mignone that about a dozen of the prisoners were kept in individual cells, and blindfolded like himself, while the other prisoners lived together in an open room, were not blindfolded, and had responsibilities for the food preparation, cleaning the facility, and the care of the blindfolded prisoners. Based on the tone and way that orders were given, it appears that it was a military-run facility. Everything was run according to a rigid schedule. The food was adequate; people were bathed regularly; there was considerable attention to hygiene. During his detention, he recognized one of the prisoners, a Dr. Alfredo Antonio Giorgi. (NOTE: Embassy case no. 681/78/12 was reported kidnapped on November 27, 1978 from the National Institute of Industrial Technology. Dr. Giorgi's family has been advised of this information.)

The Smith III Case

Dr. Mignone stated that he had received reports that the Supreme Court was dealing seriously with the third Permanent Assembly presentation of the Smith case which asks the Court to make a special judicial investigation regarding the numerous disappearance complaints which have not been satisfactorily dealt with through the normal habeas corpus proceedings. He emphasized that the latest Smith III petition contained 1,542 extremely well documented cases to support the extraordinary investigation request. There were over 4,000 pages of attachments to the Assembly submission, which was signed by 1,221 Argentines. He expressed disappointment that only "La Prensa" had accepted the Assembly's advertisement regarding the Smith presentation.

CLEARANCES:

DCM:MChaplin

POLCOUNS:WHHallman